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Reserve

TEXT OF PONTIFF'S MESSAGE  
CALLING RULERS AND PEOPLES TO BATTLE WORLD-WIDE FAMINE

Following, for your information, is an official English translation of the appeal on the world food situation broadcast April 4 by His Holiness Pope Pius XII:

With our heart in the grip of deep anguish, we speed a cry of appeal today to the conscience of the world, to the sense of responsibility of the leaders in political and economic life, to the people's spirit of human sympathy and mutual charity; to all who have eyes to see and ears to hear, to all who are able to rise above conflicting opinions to impose silence on the rancour begotten by the war, and have left their minds and hearts open to the holy voice of human brotherhood.

And in particular we appeal to all those who, united with us in the Christian Faith and fed on the doctrine and the law of Christ, can see in this appeal to their brotherly spirit the touchstone of a sincere and intense love of God. Poor humanity, just emerged from the river of blood through which it passed in the years of war, is mounting, in search of peace, a path ever rougher, ever steeper, ever more beset with brambles.

At its every step arise new hindrances and obstacles, the seriousness of which very few suspected in the first flush of hard-won victory. While statesmen, in their deliberations, often beset with difficulties, are trying to lay the first foundations of political and economic reconstruction, and to remove or, at least, smooth out the inevitable discrepancy of opinions and interests, lo, behind them rises the threatening spectre of famine.

As the experts bend over their statistics and the columns of figures slowly lengthen out under their eyes, they see forced on them the insistent and bitter certainty that the sinister shadow of famine rests on at least a quarter of the entire population of the globe.

Over immense territories it threatens to reap whole multitudes unless timely remedies are brought to bear, and their number makes almost insignificant the undoubtedly impressive host of combatants and noncombatants struck down on all the fronts of the last war.

Various unforeseen and unforeseeable circumstances have aggravated the already formidable difficulties of provisioning. In eastern Europe insufficient cultivation of the soil due to the war's onrush and the subsequent forcible driving away of a great part of the local population; bad wheat harvests in southern Europe and the lands which border on it; poor harvests, especially of rice in eastern and southeastern Asia, and drought in South Africa.

The consequences are becoming visibly clear. They are an increased and indispensable need of importations for Europe in these months before the coming harvest and an imperious necessity of aid for the populations of the other territories we have named, which in normal times were self-sufficient.

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Undoubtedly, vast regions produce much more than is needed by their own populations. But, not to speak of those which unhappily found themselves involved in the world conflagration and experienced war and postwar devastation, notable supplies, which had been accumulated, were withdrawn from the public market during the conflict and used as fodder for animals or subjected to chemical-industrial processes.

In any case, even with the provisions still available, to tide things over till the next harvest will not be possible without grave difficulty and unless even available means is used. And even so, at the beginning of the harvest practically nothing will remain in reserve.

The difficult food situation, in consequence, will not be definitely solved even then; it may persist, which God forbid, until the following harvest.

So there will be almost sixteen months, during which the daily prayer which we send up to Our Father in Heaven even in times of prosperity, will have to become more earnest and more fervent: Give us this day our daily bread!

We doubt not that the peoples who in the prosecution of their war objectives showed such a great power of organization and such an heroic spirit of sacrifice, will give proof of the same qualities now that there is need to snatch from death millions of human beings.

It is a question of setting free what stocks still exist and then of building up new ones, of hindering the waste of food stuffs or their use for any other immediate purpose than that of nourishing man, of avoiding inconsiderate or unjustifiable cessation of work, of setting apart adequate transport facilities, of taking the necessary financial measures, of seeking and using every possibility of sowing.

These are matters all of which require organizational ability and the spirit of sacrifice. Nonetheless, if organization, however expert and strong, were to be reduced to no more than an administrative policy, if the spirit of sacrifice, urged even to heroism, were not to be fixed by an ideal higher than that of mere military or national discipline, it would be little indeed.

The human race is threatened by famine. And famine, of itself, is the cause of incalculable unrest in the midst of which the future peace, yet only in germ, would run the risk of being suffocated before being born. And yet how necessary is peace for every people of this earth. In the face of this common peril there is no room for thoughts of vendetta or reprisal, for lust of power or domination, nor for any desire of isolation or of a victor's privileges. That is very well understood in North America.

In this great world offensive against famine, the United States have generously taken the lead. They have placed at the service of this holy cause their gigantic power of production. They have doubled their efforts to increase the surplus of foodstuffs, destined for exportation. Canada, too, as we know is taking the same way in its traditional liberality. For its part, Great Britain, with timely forethought, has convoked in its capital an international conference to discuss food problems and in the meantime has left in force war time restrictions on the use of many eatables.



It is certain that a small, scarcely noticeable, rationing in the better supplied countries would result in such saving of food as would afford other peoples, harder hit by famine, a marked relief in their more urgent needs. For that reason, We look trustfully to the states of Latin America. In the past the noble hearts of their citizens, Our dearest sons and daughters, have been opened wide to every appeal of charity, to all great interests of humanity.

Divine Providence has assigned them in our days a magnificent task; to be the dispensers of its gifts. It is a task such as the Patriarch Joseph had in the years of want when he was put in charge of the granaries of Egypt. In very truth the granaries of the world, the Argentine and Brazil, on the eve of the calamities saw their immense lands answer to their labor and their agricultural methods with a fertility surpassing that of pre-war years.

They are, therefore, in the happy position of being able to re-establish in large measure the shaken equilibrium by lending aid to their more needy brothers. May the conviction penetrate everywhere that the present threat of famine is a common danger, which should draw together all the peoples in brotherly solidarity and union such as leaves behind it all differences, all conflicts, all particular interests.

What does it matter, at this moment, to know where to lay the responsibilities or what share in them falls to each one for the wrongs and fatal negligences? What does it matter to ascertain who is more or less worthy of help?

What is really urgent now is that prompt and sufficient succor reach wherever need is making itself felt.

Today more than ever it is time to hearken to the words of the Saviour: "As long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me". (Matt. 25, 40).

It is time to attend also to the bitter reproach He makes to whoever for selfishness or indifference does not come to the aid of his neighbor in an obvious state of need.

In effect, these warnings show the grave responsibility before God of all those who, because of their special gifts or because of their position, are summoned to ward off that danger in a directive or in an executive capacity, by reason of their office or by their private effort.

They show the grave responsibility before God of all who by their foresight and diligence and wise economic arrangements in the production, transport and distribution of food have it in their power to alleviate the misfortunes of many.

And those same warnings show the yet graver responsibility before God of those who cruelly and selfishly accumulate and hide provisions or in any other way shamefully exploit the misery of their neighbors--individuals or peoples--for their own personal profit or to enrich themselves by illicit speculation or vile forms of trade.

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It would be fatal to think that the crisis can be overcome unless tranquility and public order are maintained. It is necessary that all remain calm. History shows us only too often the disastrous results of the delusion which drives hungry mobs to revolt and pillage. That is like claiming to make the fields fruitful by sowing sparks in the desolate stretches of stubble.

Woe to those who would will to start the fire by incitements to useless disturbances. Woe to those who stir it up by the sight of their scandalous luxury and by their extravagance.

Extravagance! Fathers and mothers of families see to it that your children better appreciate the sacredness of bread and of the earth which gives it to us. Our age has forgotten it too much. From a decent simplicity of life it has slipped insensibly into seeking and satisfying unhealthy pleasures and fanciful needs.

And, lo, God making scarcer His gift of bread has willed by this hard lesson to call it back to the straight path. May this lesson be taken in a docile spirit and lead to the establishment of a better economic and social order!

During the war years death passed forward and backward along the lines of battle and penetrated deeply into each land, striking down innumerable victims among the combatants and the civilian populations.

It is time that we bar its way, now that we see it getting ready to spread incomparably vaster carnage than that produced by the fire of arms. We must not allow it to engrave on millions of tombs of innocent children the tragic words of accusation: "The little ones have asked for bread and there was no one to break it to them" (Lamentations 4,4).

Hearken all of you individuals and peoples who have the means, in one way or another, to come to the aid of your Brothers, hearken to the Prophet's exhortation: "Deal they bread to the hungry" (Isaiah 58,7).

But fix your gaze on the grand vision: It is not only the earth's hungry who at this moment hold out to you their suppliant hands. Christ Himself asks you for the bread of which His poor are in want. Every mouthful of food which you give to them is given to Him. Every mouthful which you refuse them is refused to Him.

The day will come in which what many do not see even yet will be made manifest before the eyes of all, when the Supreme Judge will appear in the majesty of His justice to pronounce before all mankind His irrevocable sentence.

Unhappy forever will they be in whose ears will resound the terrible condemnation: "Depart from me, accursed ones...For I was hungry and you did not give me to eat." (Matt. 25, 41-42).

But blessed forever are those who will hear the Divine words of infinite sweetness, "Come, blessed of my Father....for I was hungry and you gave me to eat....As long as you did it for one of these, the least of My brethren, you did it for me" (Matt. 25, 34-40).

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